

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the amendments made above and the remarks that follow.

The provisional election, without traverse, to prosecute the invention of Group II, claims 16-18, is affirmed.

The informalities noted with respect to claims 16, 17 and 18 have been corrected.

The invention provides a method of applying a plurality of spaced apart, parallel reinforcing straps to a flattened box, whereby when a box is erected by an end user from the flattened box, it has reinforcing straps pre-applied to it in predetermined locations to obtain the desired reinforcement for that box. The method of the invention enables the straps to be applied more quickly, and with a more compact machine, than can be achieved with conventional systems and methods. This is accomplished by moving the flattened box past a plurality of strapping head assemblies that are each operable to apply a strap to the box in a position different from the positions of straps applied by other strapping head assemblies. As further defined or limited in claim 17, a plurality of boxes are simultaneously moved through the machine, and all of the boxes are stopped at the same time, with each box positioned at a different strapping head assembly, and all of the strapping head assemblies are simultaneously operated to simultaneously apply straps to all of the boxes. In a more specific arrangement, as further defined or limited in claim 18, the strapping head assemblies are arranged in pairs, and a pair of straps are simultaneously applied to each box as it is stopped.

V. D. Bilt (3,901,138) has a pair of strapping head assemblies with a turntable between them. Bundles of newspapers are advanced through the first strapping head assembly, where a strap is applied in a first direction around the bundle. The bundle is then rotated through 90°

about a vertical axis and advanced to the next strapping head assembly, where a second strap is applied to the bundle, perpendicular to the first strap. This patent is primarily directed to the turntable structure and operation, and the conveying mechanism to advance bundles through the machine and turn them for application of straps in crossed relation to each other. It does not appear that the strapping head assemblies are operated simultaneously, or that the bundles are simultaneously advanced through the machine and simultaneously stopped at the different strapping head assemblies, or that the strapping head assemblies are simultaneously operated to simultaneously apply straps to the plurality of bundles. Clearly, the V.D. Bilt machine does not disclose or suggest the operation of a plurality of strapping head assemblies to apply a plurality of spaced apart parallel reinforcing straps on a flattened box.

The use of pairs of strapping head assemblies, as required by claim 18, involves more than a duplication of parts to apply a pair of straps for greater strength. In the invention, the pairs of strapping head assemblies function to apply pairs of straps in a predetermined interspersed relationship with other straps to speed the operation of the machine and enable a much more compact machine to be used to apply the straps. See page 8 of the specification, and figure 2.

Ruggiere (6,074,331) uses a single strapping head assembly 102 to apply one strap at a time to a single box as the box is incrementally moved past the strapping head assembly until the desired number of straps has been applied. There is no disclosure or suggestion of using a plurality of strapping head assemblies as in the present invention.

Meyer (5,289,668) does disclose a system in which a plurality (three, in the example disclosed) of strapping head assemblies simultaneously apply a plurality of straps to an article, but this system is more akin to one of the "pairs" of strapping head assemblies in the present

invention. Meyer does not disclose or suggest a plurality of strapping head assemblies for simultaneously applying straps to a plurality of articles as they are advanced through the machine and stopped, in turn, at the different strapping head assemblies until the desired number of straps have been applied. In Meyer, all the straps are applied at once by the three strapping head assemblies while the article is stopped.

Modification of Ruggiere in view of Meyer would not produce the invention disclosed and claimed in the present application. Instead, the single strapping head of Ruggiere would merely be replaced by the plural strapping heads of Meyer, whereby the flattened box in Ruggiere would need to stop only once for application in a single step of all the strapping heads, rather than being advanced incrementally through the machine.

It is believed that this application as now amended is in condition for allowance.

Respectfully submitted,  
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